

1587

edward johnson building
faculty of music
university of toronto



SUNDAY CONCERTS

BACH HOUR

IAN GRUNDY, ORGAN

JOHN KEANE, TENOR

JANET STUBBS, MEZZO SOPRANO

VALERIE WEEKS, HARPSICHORD

DOUGLAS BODLE, DIRECTOR

SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 1979

3 P.M.

WALTER HALL

PROGRAM

Prelude and Fugue in C# minor
Das Wohltemperierte Clavier Book I,
No. 4, B.W.V. 849

J. S. Bach

Reflecting what Mandred Bukofzer terms the period of Bach the Mentor, Volume I of Das Wohltemperierte Clavier is dedicated to "the use and profit of Musical Youth desirous of learning", a clear indication of Bach's didactic intentions in compiling this cycle of 24 preludes and fugues. The great variety of forms and styles represented in the volume indicates a channelling of various national styles into the pen of this one great composer. The fourth prelude, a kind of courante à la française, is a clear example of Bach's love of Couperin and stylized French dance music. It is coupled with a fugue in which a subject of solemn, sustained notes underlines its affinity to the contrapuntal ricercar a form which was in fact the forerunner of the fully developed fugue. Bach introduces different countersubjects of varying rhythmic characters throughout the fugue in a manner reminiscent of Sweelinck and finally combines them over a pedal point to bring the fugue to a grandiose climax.

Toccatà in D major, B.W.V. 912

J. S. Bach

The magnificent D major toccata begins with a short improvisatory presto, after which it is divided into three sections - Allegro, Adagio and Fuga - in the manner of a Baroque sonata. These sections are linked by improvisatory interludes which sometimes assume a meditative quality but more often are designed to demonstrate the performer's keyboard dexterity. It is interesting to note that these keyboard toccatas were written early in Bach's career when he was attracted by the freedom from formal constraints which the toccata allowed. The vigorous perpetuum mobile of the final gigue demonstrates particularly well that Bach was "more concerned with outpourings of power and delight in life than formal construction."

ORCHESTRA

March 4, 1979

Flute

Douglas Stewart
Eileen Fawcett

Oboe

David Sussman

Violin

Diane Tait
Yoon Chang

Viola

Kent Teeple

Cello

Audrey King

Bass

Edward Tait

Harpsichord

Juergen Petrenko

CHOIR

Soprano

Marion Cooney
Ann McAllister
Elizabeth Phillips Mitchell
Maureen Moore
Alexa Petrenko

Alto

Frank Nakashima
Nina Vanderlinden

Tenor

Dolf Grosfeld
Peter Walker

Bass

Colin Anderson
Norman Brown
Timothy Cruickshank
Robert McMillan

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GUSTAV CIAMAGA, DEAN

Two Chorales with Chorale Preludes

J. S. Bach

Bach the mentor is encountered once again in the Orgelbüchlein whose title page reads, "Little organ book, in which a beginning organist is given guidance in all sorts of ways of developing a chorale". A practical necessity of every church organist, chorale preludes were intended as introductions or interludes to congregational chorale singing. Thus, the preludes on today's program are presented in conjunction with the singing of the chorales.

Herr Gott, nun schliess den Himmel auf B.W.V. 617, (Lord God, now open wide Thy Heaven) - a chorale which acts as a meditation for the dying, and whose prelude is indeed one of the most beautiful in the set. In the desire to attach symbolic meaning to almost all aspects of these works, it has been suggested that the octave leaps in the pedals represent a knocking at the door of heaven while the continuous left hand passage work is descriptive of suffering. Be this as it may, the beauty of the work surely lies in the urgency and expressiveness supplied as an undercurrent to the melody.

O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross B.W.V. 622 (O man, bemoan thy grievous sin) - is rare among the styles represented in Orgelbüchlein in that Bach states the chorale in a profusely ornamented form. Here we encounter the French agréments in a completely spiritualized form to represent in the most subjective manner the affection of the chorale. Particularly noteworthy is the abrupt chromaticism in the bass, and the adagissimo cadence at the end as a reference to the crucifixion.

Komm du Süsse Todesstunde B.W.V. 161

1. Aria "Komm du süsse Todesstunde"
2. Recit. "Welt, deine Lust ist Last"
3. Aria. "Mein Verlangen ist"
4. Recit. "Der Schluss ist schon gemacht"
5. Chorus "Wenn es meines Gottes Wille"
6. Chorale "Der Leib zwar in der Erden"

On the basis of his profound religious convictions which are reflected primarily in the church cantatas, Bach has been accorded the title of "the fifth Evangelist". Among the most finely wrought works in this genre are those which deal with the subject of death and

dying. Komm, du Süsse Todesstunde is one such cantata. Written in 1715 while Bach was court organist in Weimar, the work was intended for use on the 16th Sunday after Trinity, and is also appropriate for the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary in view of the common gospel (Luke 7; 11-17: the raising of the widow's son).

Musical symbolism and pictorialism as encountered in the chorale preludes play a major role in the interpretive nature of the cantata. The opening alto aria, for example, depicts a fervent longing for death which is expressed through the character of the instrumentation as well as through the common "sighing" motif of the theme. The introduction of the chorale Herzlich tut, mir verlangen (Heartily, I long for a blessed end) on the organ as the voice sings "Todesstunde", is a reflection of the calmness and certainty with which we should approach death. The ability to project simultaneously what language can only produce in succession is a unique property of music and one which Bach in his role as biblical interpreter was able to use as a means of juxtaposing dogma (chorale) and interpretation (aria).

One of the loveliest effects of the cantata is to be found in the accompanied alto recitative. Sleep (descending eighth notes), reawakening (ascending eighth notes) and the tolling of the bell all combine to suggest the last hour. The work is brought to a close by the chorale which was initially heard in the alto aria, thus framing a large musical entity. Textually and musically united, the work stands as a fitting testimonial to Bach the Evangelist.

Notes by John French.

Next Event: Opera Division Performance of ORPHEUS IN THE UNDER -
WORLD, MacMillan Theatre, 8 p.m. March 9, 10 and
16, 17, 1979.